

Rec. #	Recommendation	Submitted by
Western Maryland Economic Future Investment Fund		
TF-1	<p>The Governor will put \$20 Million in the budget each year for 5 consecutive years to be used for economic development projects in the 3 counties. This program would come under the jurisdiction of the Department of Commerce with a working relationship with the Tri-County Council for Western Maryland (TCCWMD) on setting up the criteria for what constitutes an economic development project and for which projects would get approved each year.</p> <p>This program would not deny any of the counties from applying for any other existing state program. The money from this program can be used and mixed with other State and/or Federal money. For any approved projects in a county that county would have to come up with a 20% match. Any money that may not be used in a particular year will carry over to the following year.</p>	Senator George Edwards
TF-2	Create the Western Maryland Economic Future Investment Fund with allocation of \$15.0 million annually for 5 years to provide funds for investment in projects and companies that have the likelihood to induce generational economic growth and success for the region.	Al Delia
TF-3	<p>I believe that we should go the route of asking for funding for a pilot program. Sen. Edwards mentioned a trial of \$20 million a year for 5 years.</p> <p>How this can work - We already have in place the Western Maryland RLF - they could administer the new fund, no new staff etc. The same board could also be used set rules on what the money can be used for - 50% - Infrastructure 15% - Small business tourism grants 15% - Similar to Hagerstown's PEP program 10% - Capital Grants for business 10% - Used to help match business for additional grants</p> <p>All Infrastructure grants must have a 10% match from the county</p>	Cort Meinel Schmidt
TF-4	Assistance/incentive to promote private investment in demolition and redevelopment as we repurpose our land, upper stories and infrastructure.	Stu Czapski
TF-5	Incentive for private investment in development of "workforce" housing, NOT low-income.	Stu Czapski
TF-6	Funding and incentive for infrastructure upgrades including broadband and associated technology.	Stu Czapski
Maryland Innovation Initiative		
TF-7	Extend eligibility of the TEDCO Maryland Innovation Initiative (MII) that promotes commercialization of technology developed by or in partnership with a university to all universities in Maryland.	Al Delia

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TF-8	Expand TEDCO's Maryland Innovation Initiative Program to Frostburg State University. Currently, the program is limited to the State's five research university and is designed to work with technology transfer offices to commercialize the research conducted at those universities. The program should be expanded to promote entrepreneurship opportunities at the State's other public universities, starting with a pilot program at Frostburg State University.	Jody Sprinkle
Other Recommendations From Task Force Members		
TF-9	Extend budget authority for the program beyond 2021, lower the matching requirement (to a 2 to 1 match) to provide matching private funds for the Maryland E-Innovation Initiative Fund (MEIF) for smaller institutions of higher learning. <i>[Note from MS: Potentially similar to SB 389 from 2020 Session].</i>	Al Delia
TF-10	Formally identify and designate preferred, targeted industry sectors for development of Western Maryland's Economic Future. Establish a 35% Investment Tax Credit (with a dollar amount ceiling) for private capital investments made within those specific industry sectors in specific counties of Western Maryland. (e.g. – the biotech industry may be the designated target industry in Allegany County, while in Washington County the designated industry may be the IT industry.)	Al Delia
TF-11	Facilitate the ability to create public-private partnerships (P3) to use/access state-owned land and facilities to develop business opportunities that serve the public and create economic benefits.	Al Delia
TF-12	Support enactment of the Maryland Technology Infrastructure Fund – This Administration proposal (SB 270/HB 343 of 2020) would have created a program within TEDCO to provide operating and capital grants to support technology-based projects in Maryland. The bill should be amended to specifically require an Authority member from Western Maryland and to provide enhanced financial benefits or priority consideration to projects in Western Maryland.	Jody Sprinkle
TF-13	Increase funding for TEDCO's Rural Business Innovation Initiative (RBII) - RBII assists start-up and small technology-based businesses in the rural areas of Maryland to advance the company to a higher level of success. The program offers professional ongoing mentoring and targeted funding at no cost to the company. TEDCO does not have specific state funding for this program. However, we dedicate \$500,000 from TEDCO operating funds to provide the network assistance and for a small pre-seed investment fund. Despite the limited funding, the investments to date show great promise – with 87% of funded companies still in operation.	Jody Sprinkle

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TF-14	Recapitalize and/or expand the scope of TEDCO's incubator program. The current statutory purpose of the Program is to promote entrepreneurship and the creation of jobs in technology-related industry by establishing and operating effective incubators throughout the State that provide adequate physical space designed, and programs intended, to increase or accelerate business success in the field of technology. To the extent that capital support is needed for incubators in Western Maryland, the program should be recapitalized in the Fiscal 2022 Capital Budget. Alternatively, the program should be expanded to include operating support to strengthen the programs at incubators and to create a network of incubators to share resources and programming.	Jody Sprinkle
TF-15	<u>Support Explore Maryland Tourism Tax Credit for Marylanders:</u> The State of Maryland needs to enact policies and programs that will help the tourism industry recover from economic crisis created by the pandemic. Tourism is Maryland's 10 th largest private employer and normally generates nearly \$500 million in taxes each year. However, the pandemic has taken its toll and this industry is suffering greatly. To help tourism in Maryland recover, a tax credit up to \$4,000 for Marylander's who spend money on in-state lodging and attractions/amusements (including museums, amusement parks, state parks, recreation, arcades, etc). The Explore Maryland Tax Credit would be a one-time tax credit that Marylanders could claim on state income tax through December 31, 2022. <u>The General Assembly must take bold steps to rebuild the tourism industry in Maryland and should support the creation of the Explore Maryland Tax Credit.</u>	Nicole Christian
TF-16	<u>Support Market-Rate Long-Term Rental Housing Tax Credits:</u> Similar to the low-income housing tax credits, Maryland needs to create tax credits to incentivize the development of market-rate long-term rentals. Housing for those making middle income is disappearing. It is referred to as "Middle Housing" and is housing for a large percentage of our workers. They make too much to qualify for low-income but not enough to afford expensive houses. The recent real estate boom has exacerbated the problem. Many of the market-rate, long-term rentals that were part of the inventory have now been sold. As our workforce shortage, it makes it extremely difficult to recruit employees to the area when we do not have housing for them. Housing is an economic development issue and we must develop solutions for this problem. <u>Incentives that encourage the development of middle housing are a must.</u> <u>We have more than enough low-income housing.</u>	Nicole Christian
TF-17	Support Small Business Participation in Association Health Plans: Small businesses must have access to affordable group health insurance plans to provide as benefits to their employees. In June of 2018, the U.S. Department of Labor published a Final Rule creating a new pathway for small businesses to participate in Association Health Plans. This Final Rule allows for small business owners, employees of small businesses, family members of working owners/employees access to more coverage options, more affordable pricing, enhanced ability to self-insure, and reduced administrative costs through the participation in Association Health Plan.	Nicole Christian

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	<p>Association Health Plans (AHPs) are group health plans that employer groups and associations offer to provide health coverage for their members' employees. They allow small employers, through associations, to pool their employees to gain regulatory and economic advantages that are available to large employers. By participating, all of the employees of the members are part of the same group allowing the risk to be spread across a larger group of individuals instead of restricting the risk to just the employees of a specific business. It is common knowledge that individual health insurance premiums are lower for more lives that are covered under that plan. And the plan benefits are better. AHPs are not trimmed down plans.</p> <p>AHPs cannot cherry pick or discriminate based on health or prior conditions. AHPs cannot charge different premiums to employees based on their health status. Additionally, AHPs under this rule cannot charge employers different rates based on the health status of their employees. And associations cannot be created for the sole purpose of offering an AHP. The DOL's Final Rule includes important safeguards. Consumer protections and healthcare anti-discrimination protections apply to large businesses and will also apply to AHPs organized under this rule.</p> <p>States where chambers of commerce and associations are already offering AHPs include: Georgia, Kentucky, Michigan, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Vermont, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. According to Congressional Budget Office estimates, 400,000 Americans who lack insurance will join an AHP by 2023.</p> <p>However, Maryland is preventing this opportunity for small businesses by denying them true participation in AHPs. In Maryland, small business employees cannot be included in that larger pool prohibiting spreading the risk across a larger number of lives insured and inhibiting the business's ability to access lower rates and better plans. In essence, the State is discriminating against small businesses and their owners, employees and family members.</p> <p>During the 2018 Legislative Session, the General Assembly passed the Maryland Healthcare Access Act of 2018. That Act included language that prohibits a small business's owners, employees and family members from being included in the pool of an AHP. This act must be amended to allow small businesses full participation in AHPs.</p> <p>Small businesses are the backbone of our economy. It is imperative that Maryland create a climate that nurtures business growth and allows small businesses to thrive. This includes keeping the cost of doing business in check. While not required, many small businesses provide health insurance to their employees as a benefit to retain a quality of workforce. These businesses should have access to the same group health insurance options as larger businesses, enabling them to compete with businesses in neighboring states such as West Virginia.</p>	

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	<p>The Garrett County Chamber supports small business participation in Association Health Plans to lower costs of health insurance and requests that the Legislature amend the Maryland Healthcare Access Act of 2018 to remove language prohibiting small businesses from including their owners, employees and family as part of the larger pool of employees in an AHP.</p>	
TF-18	<p><u>Allocate Additional Funding to the State Lakes Protection and Restoration Fund:</u></p> <p>The state of Maryland owns 16 lakes, with Deep Creek Lake in Garrett County being the largest. It is an economic engine, helping to generate an economic impact of \$360.5 million annually. The property tax revenue from the Deep Creek Lake watershed accounts for nearly 60% of County revenue. It is imperative for the County and the State to make every effort to maintain Deep Creek Lake as a premier natural recreational and economic resource for property owners and visitors. Deep Creek Lake is now 94 years old and as happens with any man-made lake, it is experiencing issues with aquatic invasive species (AIS), sediment accumulation, shoreline erosion and threats to water quality and conditions. The County and the State have been working together for many years to maintain the health of the lake and have even created a Deep Creek Watershed Management Plan. However, the State is the owner of Deep Creek Lake and 15 other lakes throughout Maryland. As the owner of these lakes, the State must allocate funding for protection programs, restoration and remediation projects to sustain these important natural resources for future generations. During the 2018 session of the General Assembly, the Legislature approved the annual allocation of \$1 million to the State Lakes Protection and Restoration Fund for the next three years. This amount is grossly inadequate for the State to uphold its responsibilities to all 16 lakes. As an example, it costs DNR \$215,000 annually for treatment of hydrilla just in Deep Creek Lake. Hydrilla is an AIS that is highly threatening to a lake and extensive treatment is needed to prevent the AIS from taking over a lake and rendering it useless. <u>The General Assembly must allocate an additional \$2 million annually (\$3 million total) to the State Lakes Protection and Restoration Fund and eliminate the three-year sunset as many of these projects are multi-year projects with multi-phase implementation.</u></p>	Nicole Christian

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TF-19	<p><u>Support Alternative Funding for Business Start-up & Expansion</u></p> <p>Traditional lending has decreased dramatically due stringent lending regulations. Therefore, businesses are in need of alternative funding for the ability to start and grow. Crowd Funding and Angel Investors are two sources that have proven successful in funding start-up and expanding businesses. However, Maryland needlessly limits the potential of both of these funding sources by capping the investment amount and/or not incenting individual investors. <u>To foster business growth and development in Maryland, especially in no-growth communities, the Legislature should increase the cap on the Crowd Funding total to \$500,000 and the individual investment amount to \$2,500, and implement the Angel Investor Tax Credit.</u></p>	Nicole Christian
Items Received from Garrett County		
G-1	With the extension of Route 219 to the Pennsylvania line, and hopefully the completion of the Pennsylvania project from Meyerdale, Pennsylvania to the Maryland state line, the [state-owned] property [at the I-68/219 interchange] is a prime location for a commercial business park.	Garrett County
G-2	The State, as the owner of Deep Creek Lake, must fulfill its responsibilities to the preserve and maintain the largest inland body of water in Maryland. That includes dredging the coves that have silted in and are reducing the recreational use of the lake.	Garrett County
G-3	<p>The Southern Garrett industrial Park and the Central Garrett Industrial Park are filled and there are currently no available business/industrial parks in the southern section of Garrett County.</p> <p>The County would be interested in purchasing land to develop a business park.</p>	Garrett County
G-4	Development of roads and utilities in the Keyzers Ridge Business Park (US 40 and I-68).	Garrett County
G-5	Lack of natural gas and sufficient electrical substation capacity at Keyzers Ridge.	Garrett County
G-6	<p>Intersection of I-68 and US 219 North-lack of natural gas and utilities (water). With the extension of US 219 North to the Pennsylvania line we see this as a growth area. Recently, we had a national chain interested in locating in the area, however, access to natural gas was a requirement.</p> <p>Natural gas and utilities, both water and sewer, need to be extended from Grantsville to this area.</p>	Garrett County
G-7	The Board of Garrett County Commissioners supports the Town of Oakland' request for the "Oakland By-pass"; the relocation of Route 219 from north of Oakland to MD 135. The by-pass will divert through traffic from downtown Oakland, improving safety and reducing congestion, especially with heavy truck traffic.	Garrett County

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G-8	Like the Oakland by-pass, the development of an alternative truck route is essential to the movement of goods to major transportation hubs. Potential alternatives truck routes need to be identified and developed. Maryland 135 between US 219 and MD 495, MD 495 between 135 and I-68, MD 560 between 135 and US 50 and US 48 (Corridor H) and Sand Flat Road between MD 135 and US 219 all need to be evaluated.	Garrett County
G-9	The existing wastewater treatment plant at Swallow Falls State Park is in planning stages for a capital upgrade. The project, as proposed, will decommission the existing treatment facility and unlined lagoon and construct a new pump station and interceptor pipeline to divert existing sewage flows to the nearby BNR plant at Deep Creek which has excess capacity	Garrett County
G-10	<p>The Town of Grantsville in partnership with Garrett County is developing an “affordable” workforce housing project on a parcel located on Spring Road. The County is working with the Town to extend utilities to the property and the Town is working with a developer to develop market rate housing.</p> <p>The public-private partnership is key to making this project successful. Assistance with extending utilities from the road into the property would be a tremendous benefit to the project.</p>	Garrett County
Items received from members of the public		
P-1	Redefine the meaning of qualifying biomass and a thermal biomass system— Maryland’s Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard Law – through legislation during the 2021 session of the Maryland General Assembly.	Association of Forest Industries and the Maryland Forests Association
P-2	Consider supporting efforts around the Civil War Rail Trail.	Chip Wood